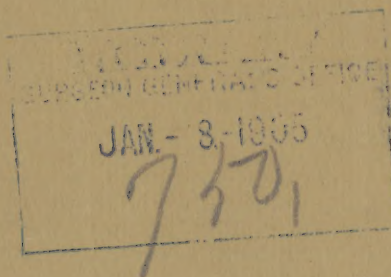
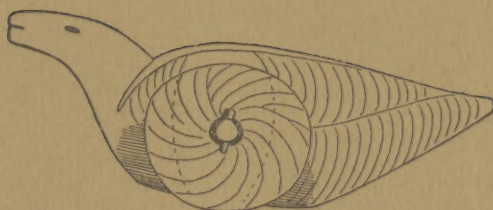


MORSE (E)

A CURIOUS AINO TOY.

BY

EDW. S. MORSE.



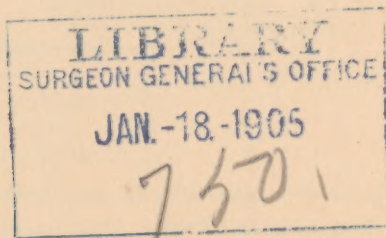
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A CURIOUS AINO TOY.

Takashi Matsuura of Tokio, an antiquarian of some note and author of several works on Yezo, the Ainos and Japanese Antiquities, has a miscellaneous collection of old things, comprising stone objects, old Buddhists' desks and specimens of bows, clubs and other objects from Yezo. In this collection I found a curious wooden toy brought from the Ishikari valley, Yezo, and believed to be an Aino

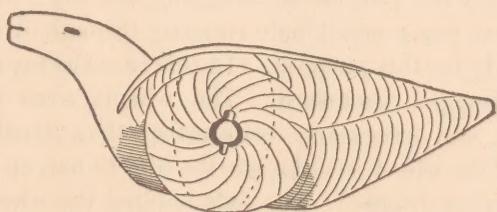


FIG. 1.

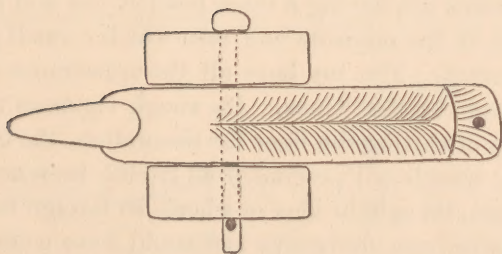


FIG. 2.

toy. This toy was in the form of a bird on wheels (figs. 1, 2). Such an extraordinary object, as one provided with wheels, made by savages, led me to make a somewhat

careful sketch of it. The object bore the marks of considerable age.

Mr. Matsura believed it to be two hundred years old, upon what grounds I did not clearly learn. The body of the bird had a uniform thickness of 30^{mm}; apparently as if it had been cut out of a board or plank. The head and neck only were roughly modelled, tapering from the base of the neck which was 18^{mm} in thickness to half that thickness at the end of the bill. The extreme length of the toy was 195^{mm}. The back and sides of the body had a series of curved lines cut upon their surfaces to represent feathers, an area (indicated by the dotted lines in the figure) hidden by the wheels, being left plain. There was no hole or constriction in the neck to which a string might be attached for the purpose of dragging the toy; in the tail, however, was a small hole running through from above, evidently for this purpose. In this case the toy must have been dragged backward. The wheels were thick and clumsy, and irregularly ovate rather than circular. This form of the wheel would cause the bird to hop up and down when being dragged. The axle holding the wheels passed through the body near the centre and consisted of a simple wooden pin having a thick head at one end and a perforation at the opposite end into which a small pin could be inserted. The toy bore all the appearance of having been made by the Ainos. Its rough vigorous make, the manner of cutting the lines for decoration, the clumsy, irregular wheels, all precluded its having been made by the Japanese, though the idea of wheels so foreign to savagery must have been derivative and could have come from the Japanese, but this form of toy I do not remember having seen among the innumerable kinds of toys in Japan.

It was not until several years after that I found another bird toy on wheels. This specimen was in the collections

of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin. Recalling the Aino toy I made a hasty sketch for comparison. The form of the bird differed somewhat in having a longer neck, a better defined head and the wheels of the toy being circular. This specimen was labelled *Yakuts, Yena, Siberia*. Unfortunately I made no measurements of the specimen though the rough sketch here presented (fig. 3) gives its

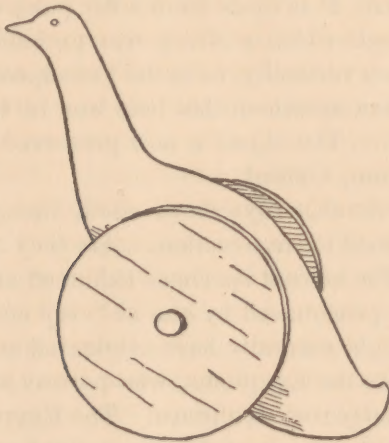


FIG. 3.

general appearance in outline. My attention was not again called to another example of this toy until I found one fig-

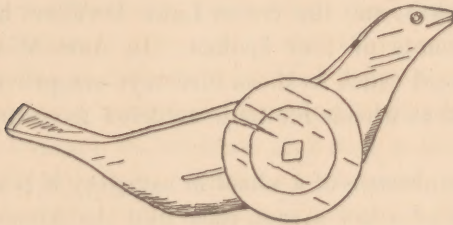


FIG. 4.

ured by Mr. W. M. Flinders Petrie, in his interesting work describing his excavations and discoveries in Hawara,

Beahmu, and Arsinoe, in Fayum, Egypt (Plate XIII, Fig. 21). In the cemetery of Hawara, dating back not later than the first century of our era, he found a miscellaneous collection consisting of numbers of workmen's tools, bronze knives, wooden lock-bolts, etc. Associated with these various objects he found a wooden toy in the form of a bird on wheels. Its form more nearly approaches that of the Yezo specimen. It is made from a flat piece of wood, and a hole, through which a string was probably tied, runs through the toy vertically, as in the Yezo specimen, though in the Egyptian specimen this hole was in the neck and not in the tail. The object is now preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

The three wooden toys above cited, though very simple, are identical in construction. Are they identical also in origin? The ancient specimen exhumed at Hawara by Mr. Petrie is pronounced by him as "very curious."

This toy might naturally have originated among a civilized people like the Egyptians, who portray wheeled chariots in their early rock sculpture. The Egyptian chariots are figured with wheels of four and eight spokes. The earliest Egyptian wheel had four or six spokes. Professor Sayce shows that the Hittite chariots had wheels of four spokes. Dr. Schliemann discovered toy wheels at Mycenæ of four spokes, and the Swiss Lake Dwellers had wheel-like ornaments of four spokes. In Asia Minor rough disks of wood (such as these bird toys are provided with) have served as wheels for their vehicles from time immemorial.

With the absence of a wheel in savagery it is impossible to conceive of a low savage race like the Ainos originating a wheeled object of any kind. It is quite easy to understand how the Ainos might have derived the idea of this toy from the Yakuts in Siberia, as Kamschatka

and the Kuriles, or Eastern Siberia and the Island of Saghalien formed avenues of communication with Yezo. Did the idea of the toy originate with the Yakuts or were they in turn indebted to their Turkish progenitors in the past for this odd plaything? We are told by philologists that the Yakuts are a distinct Turkish stock preserving many of the Turkish characteristics so strongly that, according to Peschel, it has been said, though with some exaggeration he admits, "that an Osmanli from Constantinople can make himself intelligible to a Yakut on the Yena, but it is certain that the branches of the Turkish language separated by this enormous distance are strangely alike." Is it possible that the remote ancestors of the Yakuts in Turkey derived the idea of this toy from the same people whose ancient villages in Fayum have been brought so clearly to light by Mr. Petrie? Certainly, unless it can be shown that any kind of an object provided with wheels originated among a savage people, it does not seem an absurd conjecture to suggest the common origin of this toy even among peoples so widely removed in space and time as those above mentioned.

An analogous case has lately come to light in a curious wooden object found in a tumulus in Norway. In this case, however, the object is more complex in character. In the *Bergens Museums Aarsberetning* for 1890 is a paper by Gabriel Gustafson, curator of the Antiquarian department in the Bergens Museum, entitled "A Strange Wooden Object found in a Norwegian Tumulus." The tumulus in question contained the skeleton of a man associated with weapons, large pieces of dress, remains of belts, with bronze mountings, brooch-clasps of silver, a gold solidus of Roman origin, etc., objects peculiar to a group of grave-finds which occur in western Norway. The period is supposed to be somewhere between the sixth and eighth

centuries. The peculiar point of interest was the finding on the breast of the skeleton a curious wooden object carved out of a single block and made in such a way that it could be opened to form a square, or closed by the various elements shutting up on each other after the manner of interclasping fingers. Whether this object had a mystical meaning or was simply a puzzle, was a matter of conjecture. It was important, however, to seek for some similar object with which to compare. The extraordinary fact is that its counterpart was finally found in the South Kensington Museum labelled as coming from Persia and of modern origin. The Persian specimen differed somewhat in unessential details, but the principle of interlocking, its being wrought from a single block of wood, its closing up in precisely the same way were coincidences of such an extraordinary nature that Mr. Gustafson felt justified in making a somewhat extended discussion of the subject. It seems incredible that two such complex and peculiar objects so closely resembling each other could have originated independently. Mr. Gustafson comes to the conclusion that these objects must have had a common origin.

An observant traveller in Northern Scandinavia will see many things to remind him of Oriental people. If he be fresh from Japan and China he will be impressed with the many features common to both peoples, and realize the survival to-day of many oriental facies. From a zoölogical standpoint one might attribute these similarities to the fact that the east and the west shores of the old world are not separated by an almost impassable barrier; the people are connected by a continuous stretch of continent, and a circumpolar distribution, seen in the case of animals and plants, might also apply with equal force to man and his products. If, however, one considers the ramifications of

early Eranians he will see how twigs of this stock penetrated into Scandinavia and thus render explicable the occurrence of this curious puzzle in the far north. Dr. Hans Hildebrand, the Royal Antiquary of Sweden, in his interesting book on *Scandinavian Arts* (South Kensington Handbook) shows that "there once existed during a period of some length a continued intercourse between Mahomedan Asia and Scandinavia." Coins of the Mahomedan States of Asia have been dug up by thousands in Sweden. In an ancient tomb in Gottland was found a bronze fibula, associated with shells from the Indian Ocean, and Dr. Hildebrand says "to a Swede it is quite natural to direct his attention in the first place towards the East." Of greater interest is Dr. Hildebrand's efforts to establish a standard of weight of the ancient ring money, the ornaments of a certain weight and the weights themselves. He says "not to speak of other things, even the weights found in Scandinavia (as well as in Russia) and the manner in which the multiples of the unit are indicated, show the most complete analogy with some oriental weights found in Persia."

